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## CONIFERS OF THE MORTON ARBORETUM VII

### *Chamaecyparis pisifera* (Engl.), Sawara False Cypress

The *Chamaecyparis* (Greek for "ground cypress"), formerly known as *Retinosporas*, constitute a group of ornamental conifers whose horticultural variations are in most instances more familiar and more extensively planted than the species types. The latter include several attractive arborescent forms, however, trees of distinct character rich in decorative interest.

The Sawara Cypress is one of them, a hardy Japanese species known in cultivation for hundreds of years both as a timber tree and as a typical landscape component of temple garden plantings. While the lofty dimensions it attains in the Orient (heights from 80 to 120 feet and girths up to 12) are seldom duplicated in the Western hemisphere, it does eventually reach tall tree proportions where growing conditions are congenial.

During its juvenile stage *Chamaecyparis pisifera* is characterized by a narrow pyramidal outline, horizontal plumose branches more or less ascending at the tips and a rather open, loosely branched head. Age brings about a general broadening and thinning of the top and eventually loss of the lower limbs. Their horizontal sweep remains unaffected through the years, however. The branchlets are flattened like those of the *Arborvitae* and arranged in horizontal planes like a pinnate leaf. Individual needles are ovate lanceolate in shape, scale like, closely appressed, and shiny green in coloring with whitish lines on the lower surfaces. Their pleasing greenness persists throughout the year. Tiny brown cones  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of an inch across ripen in the fall adding a measure of interest at close range. They are composed of 10 or rarely 12 shield shaped scales.

Always a conspicuous feature is Sawara Cypress bark which is reddish brown, thin and smooth, peeling into narrow strips. The tree's tendency to multiple trunks also contributes to its picturesqueness.

Growth records kept on the Sawara Cypress plantings at the Morton Arboretum have shown the annual increase in height to range from 1.8 to 3 ft., varying with the season. This substantiates the tree's reputation

as a fast grower, at least in its earlier years. All measurements were made in the forestry plot bisected by Edgewood Drive, a planting set out in 1929. The isolated tree illustrated is on a moist, well drained site in the Japanese section of the geographical groupings.

### *Chamaecyparis thyoides* (L.) Coast White Cedar

Coast White Cedar is the misleading common name of *Chamaecyparis thyoides*, a native species with the form of a Juniper and the foliage of an Arborvitae. A seaboard inhabitant of deep swampy areas from Maine south to Northern Florida and westward along the Gulf to Mississippi, it is both the hardiest and least ornamental of the tree forms. In the South its usual associates are Bald Cypress, Sweet Bay, Sweet Gum, Tupelo, Pin and Laurel Oak, in whose company it may reach heights to 60 or 80 ft. and trunk diameters of two or more. Farther north its size diminishes.

The regularity of its slender columnar outline gives the White Cedar an appearance of formality which seems almost incongruous in its chosen habitat. But, seeing colonies of it in various stages of development, growing in dense thickets as far out into the swamps as soil permits, imparts a sense of belonging. As the trees age the branches become more spreading, commonly assuming an almost horizontal position. The branchlets are irregularly arranged (not pinnately) and furnished with graceful, flat foliage sprays composed of minute dull blue green needles. Their coloring deepens with maturity and in winter a suggestion of the rustiness typical of some of the Junipers occurs. A close look at individual needles through a hand lens is almost necessary to disclose their opposite arrangement in four ranks and their glandular, scale-like appearance.

*Chamaecyparis* flowers (April borne) of both sexes are minute and inconspicuous, but the quarter inch diameter woody cones ripening at the end of the first season are interesting in both shape and color. They are about a quarter of an inch in diameter, globular and curiously carved, and are freely borne on short leafy stalks. Light green with a glaucous bloom when fully grown, they change to an attractive pinkish tan hue before assuming the brown color of maturity.

Shaggy, reddish brown bark exfoliating lengthwise in thin strips gives the trunks of old White Cedars a distinct ragged appearance. The wood is also reddish brown and although close grained is soft and weak. Being extremely durable in contact with soil and water, however, and unaffected by exposure to sun and wind, it has a definite economic value. Among its various uses may be mentioned shipbuilding, cooperage, shingles, fence posts and railway ties.

Arboretum specimens growing on dryer soil obviously do not show the rapidity of growth typical of native trees. The one illustrated, a 25 foot specimen in the mixed Deciduous and Conifer Plot on Forest Road is about 30 years old.

E. L. Kammerer



*Chamaecyparis thyoides* (L.), Coast White Cedar, in the Mixed  
Deciduous and Conifer Plot on Forest Road.





*Chamaecyparis pisifera* (Engl.), Sawara False Cypress, favorite tree of Japanese Temple Gardens.

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